

CITY OF NEWARK, NJ'S AFRICAN-AMERICAN ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

Queen Elizabeth James

Q: Good afternoon. This is Glen Marie Brickus at the home of Mr. and Mrs. Thomas James. And I want to say firstly thanks to Mr. and Mrs. James for allowing us to come and to do this interview. And we will now get started with the interview. First of all, Mrs. James, would you please give me your full name, and speak loud enough so that the microphone can pick up both of you as you speak. Mrs. James, so you would please give me first your full name.

Mrs. James: My name is Queen Elizabeth Wright James.

Q: Okay, and you sir?

Mr. James: Thomas Major James.

Q: Okay, thank you very much. And Mrs. James your date of birth?

Mrs. James: April the 17th, 1924.

Q: And you sir?

Mr. James: July the 10th, 1918.

Q: Thank you very much. Where were you born Mrs. James?

Mrs. James: I was born in Birmingham, Alabama, in 1924.

Q: And Mr. James, where were you born?

Mr. James: Selsun, South Carolina, 1918.

Q: Good. Do you have any children?

Mrs. James: Yes. We have four. Two girls and two boys. Deborah, Dahli, Thomasina and Thomas James Jr.

Q: Good. And what is or was your occupation?

Mrs. James: Well, my first occupation when I came to Newark was a beautician. That was my first occupation. I worked for Mrs. Scott. After I graduated from Essex County Vocational School for Beauty Culture and what happened, Mrs. Scott and my aunt, my uncle's wife. I came here to live with my uncle and his wife. Which she didn't know me. She'd met me when I came here. But he was my father's brother.

Q: Okay. Let's. Let me stop you there because we're gonna get back to that at a later point in the interview. Mr. James, what was your occupation? What kind of work did you do during your working years?

Mr. James: Working years, I started in the Goldsmith Foundry before World War II.

Q: Where was that located?

Mr. James: 270 Thomas Street. That was in 1940, 1938. The C. A. Goldsmith Foundry.

Q: Okay. Now since those very early days, the very early beginnings, what kind of work have you done and what was the primary work that you did that got you from where you were at that early stage to where you were when you left work?

Mr. James: From the C.A. Goldsmith Foundry I did construction work with Local 699, the Electric Card Carriers Local. To nineteen years of bartending. From nineteen years of bartending, I worked for the Newark Housing Authority. That's when I retired. I retired from Newark Housing Authority twelve years ago.

Q: Mrs. James what about you? From your early days of employment, what was your next job and what have you done during those intervening years before you retired.

Mrs. James: Oh, my first job was a beautician, working for Mrs. Scott. And after that, I went into catering business of my own, Chef Supreme, who did the mayor's picnics and everything, Mayor Gibson at that time. And from that one, after that, I went to the county. I worked for the county and the state and the City of Newark. I've had all three of those jobs.

Q: And at one time you were the co-chairperson of the Essex County --

Mrs. James: Essex County Democratic Party.

Q: -- Democratic Party.

Mrs. James: I was the first of one of us, chairladies of the Democratic Party, Essex County Democratic Party. Well I said, first black.

Q: How far did you go in school?

Mrs. James: I went, I finished Parker High School in Birmingham, Alabama, and I went about six months, the first term, in Tuskegee.

Q: Tuskegee Institute.

Mrs. James: Institute in Alabama before I came to Newark.

Q: Mr. James, how about you?

Mr. James: Three and a half years of Arts High School. That's on High Street. That was in 35 to 38. 1938.

Q: Okay. Whom did you marry? [Laughter]

Mrs. James: I married Mr. Thomas N. James. Thomas Nathan James in 1946. We had courted from, I met him in 41, and five years later he went to service. And he had wanted to marry me before, while he was in the service and all, but I asked him to wait until he was out. And he did, and he came out in February, 46, and we married in September, 46.

Q: Now, was that the first marriage for each of you?

Mr. James: First, last and always. [Laughter] I had to put that. First, last and always. I ain't changing no horses in the middle of the stream now.

Q: Okay, you have given me the kinds of work that you did and the names of your children. What was your father's name, Mrs. James?

Mrs. James: My father was named Alphonso Bryant. Alphonso Bryant..

Q: And where was he born?

Mrs. James: In Alabama.

Q: Okay. Mr. James, what about you.



Mr. James: Arthur James. Born 1897 over in Stilson, South Carolina. He lived to the ripe old age of 96.

Q: Beautiful. Queenie what was your mother's name and where was she born?

Mrs. James: Her name was Fannie Mae Wright. Well, she was a Dailey before she married. And

--

Q: Where was she born?

Mrs. James: In Alabama.

Q: And, Mr. James, your mother?

Mr. James: My mother, Jennie James was a Copeland before she married Arthur James. She was also born in Stilson, South Carolina.

Q: What was your father's occupation?

Mrs. James: My father. I know he was a big entrepreneur.

Mr. James: Bootlegger.

Mrs. James: Bootlegger. He was a big bootlegger. He was the top man. He made corn liquor and sold it.

Q: Okay. What was your mother's occupation?

Mrs. James: My mother didn't really work, you know. She really didn't. My daddy took good

care of both of us. He always said that he had two girls to take care of. I remember one time the police came and raided the house, and he told them, he says, you know, what you all want me to do? I don't have a job so I got a daughter and a wife to take care of. So that's why he was selling the corn liquor.

Q: What about your father and mother, Mr. James?

Mr. James: My father came here in 1924 and went to Goldsmith Foundry, where he worked until he retired. He was one of the fortunate individuals to collect Social Security for 33 years.

Q: What was your mother's occupation?

Mr. James: Domestic worker.

Q: Did you have any sisters and brothers, either or you?

Mrs. James: He's an only child. But, yeah, I have two brothers. No sisters. It was just the three of us.

Q: What were your brothers' names.

Mrs. James: Alphonso Bryant, Jr. and Edward Bryant, my two brothers.

Q: Have either of your changed your name from your family name. And we ask that because so many of our people you know them by one name today, and they're something else. They're Mohammed or whatever, you know, those African and Muslin names that sometimes people take.

Mrs. James: No. I've always used my maiden name, Bryant.

Mr. James: James and Bryant that's all.

Q: Well, you did migrate to Newark.

Mrs. James: Yes.

Q: When did you come to Newark?

Mrs. James: 1941. Because that's when I graduated I think, came the same year I graduated from Parker High School in Birmingham, Alabama. And that was in January. In September of 41 I came to Newark. And that's when I entered into Mrs. Scott's beauty school.

Q: Why did you want to leave Alabama?

Mrs. James: Well, my uncle that was living here, was my daddy's brother, had told him if I wanted to go to college or be anything, he would pay the expense or whatever. Cause he was doing well here. And if he would send me to him, he would make me anything that I wanted to be. And he was wrong showman at the time.

Q: Was your trip planned well in advance or was it kind of on the spur of the moment kind of decision?

Mrs. James: No. I knew that, you know, that I had wanted to come. And my mother and dad said that I could. And they said, what happened was one of my other relatives came here and my uncle here was a very strict person. You had, you know, he had a time for you to come in and a time for you to go out and all of that. And I'd had one of my relatives to come here. And she didn't want to adhere to all of that. So he sent her back to Alabama. But I did listen to him, and when he'd tell me what time my deadline was to be in, I was in.

Q: What time of the year did you come to Newark?

Mrs. James: In September. I came in September because I graduated high school in January.

Q: Was this your first trip away from home, a trip of some distance?

Mrs. James: Yes. Yes. It was my first.

Q: Mr. James, what about yourself? When did you come to Newark?

Mr. James: I came to Newark, New Jersey at the age of five from Stilson, South Carolina.

Q: Was your trip planned that you came at the age of five?

Mr. James: I came with my parents.

Q: Okay. Okay. And how did, was their trip planned in advance? Had then planned it, you know, and worked up to it until they got up to a point where they could come, or did they just decide we're going to go to Newark, New Jersey, and just?

Mr. James: My father came because I had an aunt, Aunt Julia, that lived on Clayton Street in Newark, and he had come to stay with his sister back in 1923 or 24.

Q: What time of the year did you leave? [Laughter] What time of the year was that?

Mr. James: When my father came from where?

Q: From when, from Sumter, South Carolina.

Mr. James: From Sumter, South Carolina, my parents told me I was at the age of five when I left. From 1918 I came in 1923 or 24. As close as I can recollect.

Q: Where did you go first after leaving home? Why and how long did you stay there? You came to Newark when you first left home and you've been here ever since.

Mrs. James: Ever since. Yeah. It's the only place I came. Went anywhere else. I've traveled immensely since then, but this is the first place that I came away from Birmingham, Alabama.

Q: What about you Mr. James?

Mr. James: Newark, Newark, Newark, Newark, Newark. There's nothing else that I can say but Newark.

Mrs. James: Newark. And we're still here.

Q: Did your family know anyone in Newark before coming here?

Mr. James: My father knew his sister, Julia Brown, at 11 Clayton Street which everybody knows. Unless you're in my age, nobody knows where Clayton Street is. Used to be off Westfield. It has been destructed, everything on Clayton Street. Used to be off Westfield.

Mrs. James: And I came, that's where I had the beauty shop on West Street. But I came to Newark in 1941, and to live with my uncle on Prince Street at that time. 271 Prince Street.

Q: Had anybody told you about Newark before you came here to live?

Mrs. James: The only thing I knew that was just my uncle that lived here. And he had come back home and told my dad after I finished school if I wanted to come to Newark that he would help

support me or whatever I wanted to be, he would help make me that.

Q: Mr. James, what about you, well no, you were five years old.

Mr. James: I was five years old. My family controlled my destiny.

Q: Okay. How did you travel when you left Newark. I mean, I'm sorry, when you left the south coming to Newark how did you travel?

Mrs. James: Train.

Mr. James: Train.

Mrs. James: Silver Meter or the Silver Comet, one of those.

Q: So you both traveled by train.

Mr. and Mrs. James: By train.

Mr. James: And don't, please don't leave out that chicken in the box and taking sweet potato pie in the box. Cause the idea was to take where they used to feed you. Colored people in a certain section next to the train, where you got dirty, the porter was always certain color. And you couldn't eat in the dining room in those days.

Q: Queenie, you, do you have any idea how much it cost to come from?

Mrs. James: Yes. I know, yeah, I remember. Seventeen dollars. I think it was seventeen dollars.

Mr. James: Lord have mercy! That's been a long time ago.

Mrs. James: Yeah. I remember that. Seventeen dollars.

Mr. James. Don't ask me at five. I don't know what my parents paid.

Q: But you might not have had to pay anything.

Mr. James: At five years old, I don't know what my parents paid to bring me here.

Q: What was your trip like?

Mrs. James: Coming here on the train?

Q: Yes.

Mrs. James: Well, you know, it was segregated. They had the black people, you know, in certain sections.

Mr. James: The section next to the engine.

Mrs. James: And you was the one up there, yeah, next to the engine and whatever. They had segregated, you know, they had black and colored as they called it. Not black. We wasn't black then. We were colored folks. And they had colored.

Q: Mr. James, what about you? You just mentioned that the box with the chicken and the cakes and what not so you'd have food on the way up here. What was your trip really like?

Mr. James: At five years old my parents controlled everything. I didn't know anything. I didn't have no idea at five years old. Whatever they told me at five years old that's how they traveled. With a box of chicken --

Mrs. James: I had that when I came here.

Mr. James: --potato salad and sweet potato pie.

Q: Queenie, do you have any idea how long the trip took from Carolina here?

Mrs. James: From Alabama.

Q: From Alabama.

Mrs. James: A day and a half. Yeah, a day and a half.

Q: A train trip.

Mrs. James: Yeah, because the train would leave that morning, and you'd get here the next day. That's the way it came in Alabama. And stop in Washington and change the trains, whatever.

Q: And what year was that again?

Mrs. James: 1941.

Q: How much money did you bring with you? Or do you have any particular story or anecdote to tell about your trip to Newark?

Mrs. James: Yeah, I think I had. Because what had happened, I had worked for one of the prejudice restaurant after I came out of high school, when I was seventeen. In fact, the black people were, how you got the job, you'd stand in line and carry the trays to the table for the white folks. And they liked me. And but I was about this dark as they got. All the girls had to be near white, have very light, if they were black. Yeah, light skinned. So I was brown skinned, but they



hired me. And I worked there until I came to Newark. And I made good tips. In fact, the white people came there, calling my mother, wanting to ask her to let me go with them home to work for them. And my mother said, no, you know, you're not gonna do that. But they had called her many times and asked, yeah, that they would take me home with them. From different, Ohio and different places they would be visiting Birmingham.

Q: Tell me again about the segregated facilities that the train as you came up? What, you said you stopped several times, and when you had to use the rest rooms or if you wanted to get something to eat, what was the service like or the facilities that you had to go?

Mrs. James: Well, at that time, you know, they had signs. Even on the train and all, they had signs of colored and white. Yeah, what was it Negro or colored. Colored and white. Colored I think they had on there, colored and white. So you know you couldn't go in. If you stopped somewhere and it said white, you wasn't allowed to go in there.

Q: And where did you sit on the train?

Mr. James: Second, second behind the engineer. Behind the engineer train, caboose. That was where they put the.

Mrs. James: Where they put the black people, yeah.

Mr. James: Where the colored people sat to ride on.

Q: Was it relatively clean, the train, do you remember?

Mrs. James: Oh yeah. The Silver Meteor and the Silver Comet was first class trains at the time. And it was nice. And no problems with that. It was just a matter of the segregation.

Q: Was it crowded?

Mrs. James: Oh yeah. The Silver Meteor and the Silver Comet was always full. You know, it wasn't crowded because you had to have a seat. They don't, they don't on trains, at that time, I know they didn't have no standing up or nothing. So you have to have a seat.

Q: Was food available on the train or did you bring your own food?

Mrs. James: I brought my own. My mother fry, you know, how they did it, they fry the chicken for you.

Mr. James: In a shoebox, don't forget that shoebox.

Mrs. James: In a shoebox. You know, you have your hot biscuits and your chicken --

Mr. James: And your chicken and your sweet potato pie.

Mrs. James: -- and your pie. And that was your lunch to get there.

Mr. James: Because when the porter served you.

Mrs. James: You could buy sodas, milk and juice and soda.

Q: You could?

Mrs. James: Yeah. You could buy that.

Q: What happened when you got to Newark and who met you?

Mrs. James: Oh, my uncle at the train station. Penn Station. My uncle and his wife. They both were living at the time.

Q: What personal effects did you bring with you? Like your clothing or. You were coming to live with somebody so you didn't bring any furniture.

Mrs. James: No.

Q: It was not like moving from there to here.

Mrs. James: I didn't have any furniture because I came from my mother's home, you know. So I didn't have anything like that. I just had my personal. My mother had made sure that I had nice clothes when I came here. People used to admire my clothes and ask where I bought, you know, did I get it here. And I said, no, my mother was very strict. Well, she was the kind that I had just about, I was her only girl. And I had just about everything I wanted. And so she saw that I had nice clothes when I came here.

Q: Mr. James, what about you? You came as a family unit. So did your family, did they move, did they bring personal belongings aside from your clothing?

Mr. James: The only thing that I can give my recollection is that at the age of five it's hard for me to tell exactly how I came. I only came because at five years old I had no idea whatsoever.

Q: What they brought. Yeah.

Mr. James: At five years old I had no recollection whatsoever how they came. But they did get here. They brought me here. I tell it like it is. Right or wrong, at five years old how could I know?

Q: Right. That's correct. Did you plan to return to the south, Queenie, when you came?

Mrs. James: Not, not really. I had wanted to better. You know, the opportunities was better here at that time for us as a black person. Was better than down south. I mean, you had, when me and my husband got married and we went home on our honeymoon, the certain people that my family had worked for for many, many years, and he told my husband, he said, boy. And my husband was so upset about that calling him a boy. And he asked him how big do boys grow down there.

Mr. James: I damn sure did.

Mrs. James: He did. Yeah, he asked him that.

Mr. James: I damn sure did. Cause there was segregated before even Martin Luther King got started in the bus boycott.

Mrs. James: So he says, boy.

Mr. James: I had to stick that in.

Mrs. James: Yes. He says, you know this gal? He says, you know this gal? My grandmother had worked for these people. And they knew me from, I guess, almost birth or whatever. And he said that to Tommy, he says, well --

Mr. James: Boy, he said.

Mrs. James: Boy, yeah, boy, you know this gal. Been used to a pretty good living down here you know. He said, so, if you don't think you can take care of her, you send her back here to us. He'll tell you.

Mr. James: That cracker damn sure told me that.

Mrs. James: Yeah, he told him.

Mr. James: That cracker damn sure told me that. I'll never forget that cracker told me that.

[Laughter]

Mrs. James: He sure did tell him that.

Mr. James: And let me add something else when I was down there. When I went to the cleaners to put my clothes in, and these as segregated as they were, when I went to put my clothes in the cleaners when I came back from my wife's, while we were on our honeymoon. I waited in line and white people came in. They bypassed me, and I was waiting to my clothes cleaned, and they bypassed me and bypassed me, and when everybody else left, they finally took my order. When I came back home I told my wife I'm ready to leave Birmingham, Alabama, because we was riding in the back of the bus, and when white people came in colored had to wait to get served.

Q: Did you know of anyone who came to Newark around the same time as you came or stayed briefly and returned to the south to live? If so, who were they and why did they return?

Mrs. James: No. Because I came here to live with my uncle. In fact, I had three or four uncles here at the time when I came. And they all had come here and they died here. So that was, I don't know anybody that went back.

Mr. James: Well, since I being five I don't know. I eliminate that five years, that five years that I don't know.

Q: Did you help anyone else to leave the south and come to Newark? At any point since you came, did you help anybody else to come here?

Mr. James: My recollection is my father helped his brother who was down south. Named Nathan James, which was his brother. And told him how living conditions was better. My father told him to come up, come to Newark, and my father assisted his brother named Nathan James when he came to Newark. And what year I don't know. Uncle Nathan.

Mrs. James: And I didn't have anybody to come up. My brother came up to visit, but he never liked it. He came for one time, but he went back home. He didn't like it here. And he's still there.

Q: So your brother came here and went back. I see. How would you describe your fellow migrants, that is, people who came around the same time you did or other people that you know who came to Newark perhaps even after you did? How would you describe them in terms of their educational background, their work experience, and the kind of work they did once they got here, and where they lived and that kind of thing.

Mrs. James: Long time to think of.

Mr. James: You came here at seventeen. I come here at five. At five I don't know.

Mrs. James: Well, right now, I have one friend, he was here just for the party last. Honey. We knew each other from kids. He was, wasn't retarded, but he was slow, had a lisp.

Q: A speech impediment.

Mrs. James: Impediment, yes. And he, kids in the school at home used to make fun of him. You know how kids make fun of kids like that. So I used to always stand up for him and fight for him and make him. And I would sit him on my porch when we lived on the same street. We lived, I got three o'clock. And we lived on the same street in Alabama. He was here just, what last week wasn't he?

Mr. James: [Cannot make out what he's saying -- too faint]

Q: Okay. What, do you have any kind of, any photographs or travel tickets or anything that you brought when you came back, when you came to Newark to live? You have any of that kind of stuff? Any documents or anything?

Mrs. James: Not that I know of. Cause, see, since I've been here, I've had a couple of fires and you know.

Q: What about family pictures, photographs of your family that was in?

Mr. James: Wedding pictures. Wedding pictures we had made. But they're down in the basement. And our honeymoon.

Q: Queenie, and how many times have you been back to Carolina since you came?

Mrs. James: Alabama.

Q: Alabama.

Mrs. James: Yeah, because he was Carolina. [Laughter] I'm from Alabama. Oh I go, I used to just, in fact, I'm going in another month or so soon as I feel better. To see my brother and I have a retarded brother that's about sixty-seven years old. And I go to see him more. I have my other brother too. Just the three of us. My two brothers and me. And my baby brother is retarded. And he's in a nursing home there in Birmingham now. And I go there and I've had a lot of experiences with them, to get them on the right line too. Because the way they didn't treat him right. They used to take his clothes. And I would come from here and buy all kinds of things. Like I explained to him, I'll buy him anything that I needs, but I can't afford to buy them as fast as they take it. You know, you buy new shirts and new sweaters and all that stuff, and they take it

home for their boyfriends or husbands or whatever. And we found that out. And the manager of the nursing home now, when I got there, they take me to his closet, and I know that's what I bought the last time I was here. And it's still there.

Q: Good.

Mrs. James: So they're very.

Q: Where did you first live when you came to Newark?

Mrs. James: Prince Street. 271.

Q: And how long. 271 Prince Street.

Mrs. James: Prince Street.

Q: How long did you live there?

Mrs. James: Until I married in. That was 41, I married in 46. And when I married, then we moved to West Street where I had the beauty shop. I had the beauty shop before I married. And so across the street, I bought the house across the street from the beauty shop. And there that was 55 West Street I think it was.

Q: What was your first impression of Newark when you first got here?

Mrs. James: Well, I liked Newark.

END SIDE ONE, TAPE ONE; BEGIN SIDE TWO, TAPE ONE



Mrs. James: I didn't have to, at that time in Newark, girls were going to block. I don't know if you know what it means. At that time, the guys had them out there, you know, doing all, everything for some money. And my uncle explained, and his wife, explained all that to me. And he said, you didn't have to do that because if you needed anything, you come to me and I will give it. He was a longshoreman at the time, and he was a big time gambler. So he kept money flowing, you know. And he used to give me like, and when I started doing hair, I didn't make but twelve dollars a week was the salary. And he used to give me fifteen and twenty dollars a week allowance. And I could do, it was something, his wife was living at the time, Irene, and she would, you know, buy me all the clothes I wanted, anything. She'd take me shopping. I mean, whatever I wanted, you know, because they had that extra money by him gambling like that. And he was, they, the two of them, and they took pride in me because they wanted children, but they never had any. So when I came up, I was like a, in fact, she died, his wife, at thirty-five years old from trying to have a baby.

Q: Okay. Now you said you lived with your uncle and your aunt --

Mrs. James: And his wife.

Q: And did they own the house?

Mrs. James: No, this was on Prince Street. 271 Prince Street. It was apartment building.

Q: I see. Okay.

Mrs. James: But he was buying, in fact, he bought one after and gave it to me. I'm trying to think where it was. Was it on West Kenney or somewhere he bought, and he gave it to me. But he was very good. But he never owned his own home.

Q: And after you started, after you got your own beauty parlor, you bought your own house. You have any idea what you paid for the house at that time?

Mrs. James: I know it wasn't that much. I think houses were selling like four, five thousand dollars or something like that during that time.

Q: What was the neighborhood like on Prince Street where you lived and then on West Street where you bought the house, what was the neighborhood like?

Mrs. James: Oh, Prince Street was nice at the time. You know, it was just mostly apartment buildings on Prince Street where we lived. But it was nice though, you know. People seemed to have a way of life, a decent way of life, and wanted to live as comfortable as they could. And then when I went on West Street, when I bought on West Street, and I bought across the street. My beauty shop was 54 and I lived at 55. And that was very nice. And I used to, I tell you what, the, you know how years ago you used to have those salesmen, you buy stuff on credit and pay the two dollars a week and like that. I used to get my spreads. I used to love, still do, pretty spreads and drapes and stuff like that. So you get and pay him two dollars a week or whatever like that. So the guys used to bring, these white guys would bring people to my house to show it, and even the man that owned the house on West Street, he would bring people in to show them my place. How nice I had it.

Q: Was it a mixed neighborhood?

Mrs. James: Yeah. When we first moved in there, it was white in there. Yes.

Q: Was it commercial and residential or just straight residential at that time?

Mrs. James: No. It was commercial too. You had stores along there.

Q: What other kinds of people lived there? We said it was a mixed neighborhood. What other kind of people did live there?

Mrs. James: Yeah. Well, you had the, I don't remember what the nationality of people, but they were white.

Q: Okay.

Mrs. James: But you know what? They were poor, really poor whites is what I would call them. Because they would tell me that they would always try to admire me and whatever because they said we lived better than they did. You know, they would always say that to me. And would always come up to me. In fact, I used to feed some of them. They didn't have any food. And I was, I had the beauty shop and like that. And I helped, I guess that's where all my blessings come from now cause God is good, and because I used to help those people on there even though they were white. We had some that one time her husband left her, and she didn't have nothing to eat. And I brought them to my house and fed them. And they and fed them. That has been my make of life. I'm doing it right now here in this house. I have a couple up there that got put out. And the guy was a friend with my husband. They played cards together. And they're here right now. So that has always been my plight of helping people.

Q: That's good.

Mrs. James: And I don't regret it at all because God is good.

Q: Right. Queenie, where did you live next after you left Prince Street?

Mrs. James: When I left Prince Street, I went to West Street So I only lived in three places in Newark, and that's Prince Street, West Street and here.

Q: How long have you been here?

Mrs. James: Oh, fifty some years. In this house.

Q: Well, I don't have to ask you the next part of this question, what was your housing like. Because this beautiful. I looked at it as I drove up outside.

Mrs. James: Oh, thank you.

Q: Where did you do your shopping when you came to Newark?

Mrs. James: Well then, you know, Prince Street had all the markets and the best Jewish, all the Jewish markets. I used to love the Jewish markets meat. I used to get my meats on Prince Street from the Jewish market cause, and they would, they knowed me at the time because I was a beautician and I kind of, I don't know, I'm trying to think about where I got that idea from. But I always felt that meat was very important in your life. And I was very fussy about my meats. I just, you know, I didn't like meat that had sat a while, and they ended and a lot of stores did that to black people. They would bring the meat down from one store to the other after it's been three two or three days, but see I didn't like that. So I went to a special butcher. And he knew me, and he cut my meat right there. If I wanted a steak, cut it right there to what I want.

Q: Where did you do your clothes shopping and other things that you needed like household goods and your clothing? Where did you buy those things in those days?

Mrs. James: Well, I went to the finest stores that we had downtown. I used to buy my clothes at, I'm trying to think of some stores that were in Newark at the time. I don't exactly remember the name and all. But I know, was it Halsey Street or where all those fine women's shops were. Halsey or? I think it was Halsey Street downtown. They used to have the women's shops down there, and I used to shop there and buy, you know, dresses and my clothes.

Q: Why did you choose the stores where you chose to shop? Was it because of the quality of the?

Mrs. James: Quality and the. You know, I was always the kind, even today, like something different. And so I found out that, you know, you go into the exclusive shops and you find things that you didn't see. I never liked to just walk in the street and see. Of course, you can't buy anything that somebody don't have. But I never wanted to buy things that every time you walk, and I've seen that. Walk around you see that same outfit, you know, fifty million times or something.

Q: How were you treated as a customer when you went to these stores?

Mrs. James: Oh very well. Very. When I went to those stores during those years, that was back in the 40s and 50s, they respected me, and they treated me very nice. The only thing I had one problem when I first started going that they didn't want us as black people to try on. Didn't want you to try them on. And then, see, I would walk out. Because if I couldn't try it on what am I gonna buy it for.

Q: What was the ethnicity or the race of the people that owned the stores in your neighborhood?

Mrs. James: I don't know what nationality. They were white, but I don't know the exact nationality. I can't say whether they were Jewish or what, but I know they were foreigners like, you know.

Q: If they were not black, did they hire black people?

Mrs. James: No. Not at that time. I think there was one meat market on Prince Street that had blacks. Yeah. Was one meat market. I can't think of the name, but there was one meat market on Prince Street that hired blacks.

Q: Did the people in the neighborhood resent these store owners because they didn't hire blacks or for any other reason? Because of the way they were treated or did they resent them for any

reason?

Mrs. James: I can't, I don't remember whether they did. I know I was the kind if I wasn't treated just like the other person, whether they were white or whoever, I didn't go there. I wouldn't go there anymore. I know I remember that. I would know that. And they became to respect me for that when I'd go in the stores. You know, because I felt that I was just as good, and I was brought up that way in Alabama that I was just as good as anybody. And if I wanted something and I had the money to buy, I don't see where it should be any different for me or the other person.

Q: Right. Did they offer you credit? Were you able to get credit at any of the stores at that time?

Mrs. James: I really don't know because at that time. And I tell you another thing. Mrs. Scott, we used to go shopping on Sundays in New York. So I didn't really do a lot of big shopping here in Newark. I would go with her. We would go to New York, and she would drive. When she bought her first Cadillac. And we would drive to New York and go down, you know, where they, what did they call it. They used to go down where the big shopping area.

Q: In the Village?

Mrs. James: In the Village and all downtown and all that. We used to go there. I used to go with her. And we would pick up clothes and stuff like that.

Q: How would you compare your experiences in the south with your experiences in Newark with respect to the following? Eating habits. When you came to Newark, were you able to purchase dry goods and foods that were familiar to you in the south?

Mrs. James: Oh yeah. Yeah. Cause my uncle sometimes would cook [?].

Q: I didn't hear it.

Mrs. James: Would cook, you know, black eyed peas, lima beans, greens, and all. And I never was one to like greens that. Now I love them. But when I was a kid, I didn't like them because my mother would grow the turnips and the cabbage and all that stuff. In Alabama we had that in our backyard. We had a garden, you know, at that time.

Q: So you were able to buy soul food in Newark that you were accustomed to eating down south?

Mrs. James: Eating at home, yeah.

Q: Yeah. Okay. What ways if any did people in Newark dress differently from people down south?

Mrs. James: Well, I didn't see that much difference. You know, people here dressed nice and the people down south, and especially in Birmingham. Those were, I just had my girlfriend was there for the Baptist Convention, Ms Chambers was there not, what last year. And she was even talking, even today, of how those women dress. Because the women, see, one thing about the Alabama people, the women really dress. The men work to see that their women had the best of clothes. My mother used to wear the finest of clothes. Yeah, when I grew up. My daddy would take her. I remember him getting. I don't know if you remember getting the First World War pension. That he had, he was in the First World War, and when they paid the pension off and they got a lump sum of money, I think five thousand or something like that. And my daddy told my mother to go down to. Lumber, Joseph and Loeb was the fabulous store that many blacks didn't go to in Birmingham. And he told her to go there and buy whatever she wanted. And that's where she used to get a lot of her clothes there. And today, even like Mrs. Chambers was saying, black people really, she say, when she went to the convention, how, you know, nice and how dressed, their clothes. So different and all so nice.

Q: Did, relatives and friends as helpful here in Newark as they were when you were down south?

Mrs. James: My relatives and friends?

Q: Yeah.

Mrs. James: Oh yeah. My uncle that I came here to live with. That was, like I said, when I came here, I had three or four uncles, but they died. And then my Uncle Doc, that was the one that I really lived with. And they, you know, he, whatever I said I wanted or whatever. His wife was a fashion buyer and like that. And she would take me shopping and whatever I saw I want, they would buy it for me.

Q: You were very fortunate as a young lady.

Mrs. James: I was. I was. As a young lady. My uncle, you know, he used to come in from gambling and throw money on the floor. Fifty dollar bills and all that. And he called me kid at the time cause I was just seventeen. He said, kid, if the kid don't shine tomorrow, don't worry about a thing. Those were his words. I never will forget that. And he was so young when he died. That thing hurt me so bad. He was just forty-eight years old.

Q: So you were very definitely a part of an extended family?

Mrs. James: Yeah. Because they didn't have any children, and I was just a lifesaver for them, you know, company and whatever. You know. That they felt that they had a child.

Q: How did people, say for instance people of your age at that time and younger, how did they address older people? Did they call them Mr., Mrs., aunt, uncle?

Mrs. James: Oh yeah. Mr. and Mrs. You never saw, if you passed someone, hi Mr. Jones or Mrs. Jones or whatever. It was the proper thing to do. And then you didn't pass anybody and not speak. Well, I was brought up that way in Alabama, that you. We had one lady, Miss Lewis, in



Alabama that lived next door to us. And she was so mean to us as kids. Would you believe it that I was the only one who would come from New Jersey to comb her hair twice a year. Because the neighbors, she was such a mean old lady and she wouldn't allow her to touch her fence or nothing, her yard. And she would put poison ivy on that we would break out. You know, your hands and stuff would break out. And after I came here and had learned my beauty culture and had a beauty shop and all that, I would go home every year, and twice year. That would be the only time her hair would be braided or combed. And my mother, they had the same doctor. And the doctor wouldn't come to see her until my mother go over there and bathe her up. And the neighbors would say how doing, mean as Miss Lewis, her name was Miss Lewis. And Miss Lewis didn't allow us to touch her fence as kids. And my mother would end up going over there bathing her for the doctor to come to visit her because they had the same doctor. And I would go, and every twice a year when I go home, I would wash her hair and it would be just matted. You know, just matted. I'd wash it and run the straightening comb through it. And it didn't get washed again until I go back again.

Q: Did you, when you were young growing up, did children at that time address older people as aunt and uncle or cousin even if they were not --

Mrs. James: Were not related.

Q: --family relatives.

Mrs. James: Yes. They did. Because they would call people aunt so and so, or, you know, uncle so and so and like that.

Q: How were such events as birthdays and weddings and funerals observed, were they observed differently there than they are here, or were they when you came?

Mrs. James: No. What you mean? Birthdays, weddings, and --

Q: Funerals.

Mrs. James: --funerals. No. It's about the same. You know, we, you know, our big funeral home was the millionaire black, Slip and Glassman. And just about every black person, Slip and Glassman buried them. You know. And then I think later on there became another black one or something there in Birmingham. But Slip and Glassman was the main, you know, he was wrote up as one of our millionaires. He was one of the main men for burying us. And he did a beautiful job where everybody liked it. Slip and Glassman.

Q: Were holidays like Christmas, Easter, Fourth of July and Thanksgiving celebrated differently in Newark then they were in your southern home? If so, how did the celebrations differ?

Mrs. James: No. Christmas. It might have been a little different because on Christmas would come to your house in the morning. My mother would have coffee and bake cakes and stuff, and people just come by and say, Merry Christmas. And you'd have a cup of coffee and a slice of cake or piece of pie or something like that. That's the difference where I don't think people did that here.

Q: What about New Year's? How did you celebrate New Year's?

Mrs. James: Well, most of the time I think it was at church. You know, go to church when the New Year come in. I remember as a little girl going with my grandmother and like that.

Q: Watch Night meetings.

Mrs. James: Yes.

Q: What about Thanksgiving. Thanksgiving has always been the primary family day. So did your family gather at?

Mrs. James: Oh yeah. We always had that. My mother used to do all the big cooking. And my dad, my daddy used to love to cook cause he cooked in the army. He was a chef and that's what he got his diploma from, discharge was on there. He was a head chef in service. And he was a good cook. And you talking about some corn bread. Whew! My dad could cook. He'd get up on Sunday morning or whatever and cook that corn bread. And that's all you need. Just put your butter on it, and that's it.

Q: How did the use of items like liquor, drugs and tobacco, pipe, cigars or cigarettes or snuff, chewing tobacco compare there as to here? Did you find people used those kinds of things more in your home town than they did here or was it the other way around?

Mrs. James: No. I would say about the same. Because at home, my daddy was a bootlegger. You know, with corn liquor. So they'd drink. They'd come and buy it by the pints or whatever. He'd have it all. I never will forget. He would have it up on the roof there. He had to go up there and get it off the roof. That way he had it hidden, the corn liquor. And he was the bigshot of the corn liquor, you know, sellers. And cause he would make the corn liquor and then sell it, bottle it up and sell it. He had a business, you know, it was his business.

Q: What about substances like clay dirt and starch? Did you ever know anybody who ate those things?

Mrs. James: Yes. A lot of people ate that. But I never, I never could see what was the thing of it. But I had friends that do it, and kids eating the dirt, eating the red dirt. And I saw that on many days, but I never had a taste for it.

Q: How did the use of such home remedies as patent medicines and midwives in Newark compare with the use of the same things in the south? How did the use of home remedies, you know?

Mrs. James: Well, I think they used more home remedies down south then they did here. After I

came here, you know, it was doctor or whatever. But I think the home remedies, because your grandmother would come over, bring something over or, you know, something. Gal, take this here. Or whatever. And we'd be feeling the next day or so.

Q: When children were born were they primarily delivered by midwives at home, or did women go to hospitals to have their babies there?

Mrs. James: When I remember, a lot of them went to the hospital. We had the, it was called Hillman's Hospital. And I was seeing something on TV about, and this is top hospital in the country now. Because I saw something not too long ago with it in Birmingham.

Q: You know, a lot of people grew up believing in witchcraft. So did you know of any of that kind of thing?

Mrs. James: Oh yeah. Yeah. I knew that that when used to hear them talk, you know, as a kid. I used to hear them talk. And they'd get some kind of. Well, we used to call it whodo or something. Whodo, and they'd put it on, you know, on the man. Or if they want to get that man, or whatever, they used to do that. I used to hear that as a little girl twelve, thirteen years old, you know.

Q: How were pets regarded in Newark in comparison with your southern home? Did you have any pets?

Mrs. James: Yes. I had a little dog. My daddy bought me. I never will forget. I used to get so tired of him cause he'd run away and break his noose and all, and the kids would, Queenie, your dog is loose, your dog is around the corner. And I'd got to run and get him. And I told my daddy you should sell that. Because I think he paid for him or something. And I said, well, you can sell that dog. I'm tired of running after him. Yeah, but I had a dog.

Q: Did you have any pets after you came to Newark?

Mrs. James: Yeah. Yeah. Since I got married, we've had dogs. I had Prince was here. And I've had a couple of dogs. In fact, we just lost a cat. Just last, this year, a few months ago. Timmie. And you wouldn't believe it. He had heart trouble. Because we took him to the vet. And he was so, oh, he was so loving. He would just get up and get up on the bed there and just hug and rub me on my face, and just kissing me and kissing me. And Timmie, that thing hurt me when that, we went to see him put away. And that thing hurt me.

Q: How long did you have him?

Mrs. James: We had him quite a few years. I kind of forget. But we fell in love with him, and he died from heart trouble.

Q: What about crime and juvenile delinquency there as compared to here? Did you have, were there problems with juvenile delinquency and juvenile crime there before you left?

Mrs. James: Well, not too much. I mean, if the kids like what we had made a lot of playing hookey we used to call it in school. And they maybe played hookey or something. But they didn't do any crime or anything. But not that I know of.

Q: What about when you came to Newark, when was it that your first noticed the incidents of juvenile crime and juvenile delinquency here in Newark?

Mrs. James: Well, it was probably sometime after. Because when I came to Newark, the young people were really about just having a clean, good life. The ones that I met. I really didn't know a lot of them that got into trouble or something. Because what had happened, the people that I had met they had come from south just like me. And they were in that class that they brought up to be something and like that. And they didn't get in a lot of trouble like kids are doing now today. To me they didn't.

Q: What was your perception of blacks helping each other in Newark?

Mrs. James: Yeah. They were very good about that. Blacks seemed to help. Especially in 1941 when black people were migrating here. And everybody was sticking together. I know when I lived on Prince Street everybody helped each other. If it was somebody, and when I got my beauty shop, I used to take people in and buy food for them. I've had a lot of cases of people that didn't have nothing to eat. I would take it and my husband used to fuss at me. And Queenie you can't feed everybody. No, but I would do that. I would take them in, and then I had people that hadn't ate for a day or so, I'd take them to my beauty shop and go out and send somebody out and buy. What I wouldn't do cause some of them would take the money and drink it up or do something else with it. So what I would do would go and buy the food and let them sit there and eat it.

Q: How were overall race relations with whites in Newark compared to relations with whites in your southern home?

Mrs. James: Well, like I say, I made a lot of nice white friends at home. I never will forget that a girl, white girl, that I grew up with. She saw me. I was visiting there then from here. And she came and hugged me and was just so glad to see me. We had been friends since kids, little kids. So this other white lady said to her, why you hugging that nigger for? Like that. So she told her, she said, lady, her and I was kids together. And she was my friend And I will hug her and kiss her cause I hadn't seen her in a long time. Get downtown somewhere. And this cracker say, why you hugging that nigger? And she told her off. She said we were friends, we were kids together. And she say, and, she said, I will hug her anytime that I see her.

Q: In general though Queenie, what was the relationship between whites and blacks like in Alabama.

Mrs. James: Oh, well, you had your problems. Because they really didn't, you know, they didn't

care for you period. You know that. And I think what happened was that we as blacks just stayed to, as they say, in our places I guess or whatever. And that was it. We didn't bother them and they didn't bother us. You know, unless you had to work for some of them or something like that. Other than that, you didn't bother with them. My daddy had the white liquor man bringing liquor there, and he would come there and get the money off the porch. You know, what he paid them off. The police in Birmingham. He would pay em off to not lock him up or bother him. And my daddy was the kind that could talk a mule out of anything. They have him ready to sit in the police car, and when my daddy got through talking to them, okay Alphonse go ahead. Cause you know what my daddy's word was.

END SIDE TWO, TAPE ONE; BEGIN SIDE ONE, TAPE TWO

Q: Okay. We were talking about race relations between whites and black.

Mrs. James: Well, the race relation, like I say, my daddy made a lot of good friends. Like he had white friends and the blacks or whatever. But it wasn't. I think it really wasn't that bad, you know, that someone just, just really tried to hurt you or nothing. Cause, they, where I lived, we lived on Thirteenth Avenue. Tenth and Eleventh Street were white people. We lived on Cousley Street. I never will forget it. My address was 1313 Cousley Street. And that was Thirteenth Avenue. Eleventh and Twelfth was white people. Thirteen, Fourteen and Fifteenth Street were black folk. They had started buying those houses. My daddy bought that house when I, maybe, I think we moved in there when I was about five years old. And we had lived there, and the whites lived on the Tenth, Eleventh and Twelfth I think. No we lived on Thirteenth. And that was it. And we, they got along okay, you know.

Q: What major customs and traditions from the south do you recall surviving in New York? What about cookouts and barbecues?

Mrs. James: Did we have it at home?

Q: Did you do that at home, and --

Mrs. James: Oh yes.

Q: -- did you continue to do it here.

Mrs. James: Yeah. We had backyards. My daddy used to, we had a whole side that my daddy made me a park. My own park. And all the kids would come and put, they had a couple of benches in there. And the kids would come there, and that's where I played. My daddy made that so we could play ball or games or whatever.

Q: Were there any other things that you did that you, that were customary for black folk to do in the south that was continued after you moved here? We talk about the cookouts or?

Mrs. James: Yeah.

Q: Or I guess picnics and cookouts would come in the same category.

Mrs. James: Yeah. We had the same thing. Family get togethers.

Q: Right. Okay. So that, you did that and you continued to do that.

Mrs. James: Yeah. Continued to do it here. Yeah. Right.

Q: What things like hunting, fishing, trapping and gathering berries do you recall doing in the south? And what did you do once you came to Newark?

Mrs. James: Well, what happened. I used to go, my mother's home was like Silacausa, Alabama. Okay? So I used to go there every summer for the three months we out of school, and were June.



So July and August, come back in September after Labor Day home. So I'd spend that with my grandmother and aunt, and they, now my mother had an uncle that had a farm. Now she wouldn't let, my grandmother wouldn't let me go to visit him til after they come from the farm. Because anybody came down that way, he'd put them on the farm to help him to do some work. And so grandma say, you ain't going to Uncle George house until after they come off the farm. You know, after they come doing their work and all because he would have anybody that came picking something. So, but I liked it. But she didn't want me doing it. And I would do that. Uncle George is, that was my mother's daddy's brother, Uncle George.

Q: How was you received or treated by African-Americans who had lived in Newark for a long time once you got here?

Mrs. James: Oh, I was treated nice. I met a lot of friends once I got to Newark, and I met other people that were from other parts of the south. And we got together and, you know, I've made a lot of friends here.

Q: Did the people who came from the same area that you did, did you know of anybody who kind of settled in the same neighborhood? You know, like people tend to congregate where you know somebody or you're related to somebody, or they came from the same place as you did. Did you find that happening in Newark, or did people just live wherever their relatives lived or wherever they found accommodations?

Mrs. James: That's right. They did. They lived. Because like when I came here, I lived with my uncle. And that was on Prince Street. That was where he lived. And that was my beginning on Prince Street. I never will forget 271 Prince Street.

Q: What kind of work did you do in the south before coming to Newark? And what was your wage and what skills did you have and how did you get them?

Mrs. James: Well, before I came to Newark I worked in the cafeteria. The cafeteria was prejudiced. It had, it was called Britland Cafeteria. They only hired the black girls to carry the trays for the white people. But I made good money. They liked me. In fact, a couple, cause they would cater to people that were traveling that were out of town, and one couple wanted, they called my mother up. Wanted to take me back to Ohio or somewhere to, you know, work for them. And my mother said, no. You're not going no Ohio with somebody you don't even know. And they wanted to pay my way and everything to go there to work for them. They liked me so well in the restaurant. And in the restaurant they only hired, I was about the darkest that they hired of us. You know, they would be of half white or whatever that they hired. And you're standing on the line and you'd get the customers, if they were every day customers, you would gain your customers and your good tippers or whatever by carrying their trays. You'd carry and take it out, and they sat down and eat the food.

Q: What was the wage? What did you earn?

Mrs. James: I think I made about fifteen dollars a week or something?

Q: What skills do you --

Mrs. James: But I made tips too. That was, the going salary I think was twelve or fifteen dollars, something like that. And then you had your tips.

Q: Did you learn any particular skills before you came to Newark?

Mrs. James: Well, not really. I always loved to cook at home and whatever, you know. And my mother did a lot of entertainment so I learned a lot from her as far as the cooking concerned.

Q: What was your first job in Newark and how did you get it?

Mrs. James: My first job. Was in beauty culture. That was my first job from Mrs. Scott. Because I, what happened when I got here, as I said, my aunt and her were friends. So when I got here, she had said, well, Mrs. Scott wants you to, gonna tell you how to go to vocational. She had everything ready for me, Mrs. Scott, and that's how I entered vocational for beauty culture. And I went there and did my whatever, and you have to pass a test. And I passed my test and then I started working for Mrs. Scott, was my first job.

Q: How long did you stay with Mrs. Scott?

Mrs. James: Well, you had, before you could own your own shop, you had to work two or three years I think before. And I worked those two or three years there, and then I opened my own shop. Called Diamond's Beauty Salon.

Q: Diamond Beauty Salon.

Mrs. James: Diamond Beauty Salon.

Q: How did you regard this job? How did you like working for Mrs. Scott?

Mrs. James: For Mrs. Scott. Oh beautiful. I have no, cause she was one that tried to help her people. And she would train you. She would, she trained me personally. She would do her girls that way. If you, she'd watch you as you were doing the hair. She was a strict one for washing the head. You know, to make sure she'd look at that head and make sure no dandruff, nothing there, and so when you'd wash it, she'd come there and check it and look at it. She was a gem, I tell you. And what she liked in helping people. Her thing was. You know, and she made all of her girls very, and she was proud of us. And she was so proud til when she went there and married, met this other man and then she had married. Her name was first was. What was her name? Stewart. No. It was. I'm trying to think of her first name. And then she met this man in Chicago and she married him. But they didn't stay together maybe two or three months or

whatever. And, but that's what made us want to go to Chicago. She paid our way for all three of us girls, Annabelle and all of us to go to Chicago. And she gave us a month's vacation with pay. She was a gem, I tell you. I'll never forget her. And she was, like I say, the start of my life.

Q: Based on your work experiences in the south, what major adjustments did you have to make regarding your work with Mrs. Scott?

Mrs. James: I didn't have too much problem, excuse me, of adjusting. Because the little work I did there was in the restaurant, and coming here I had learned a trade. And going to work for her was a pleasure. I had no problem with it, you know. And she was a stickler too. You know, she had her time you start doing your first hair at six and seven o'clock in the morning. You had to be there. And that was her. By the time you get there, she's done maybe two heads already. Cause she would get up at five or six and start doing her hair. That's what made her a millionaire.

Q: How far was the job from where you lived at the time? And how did you get to work?

Mrs. James: On Prince Street. And she was on Barclay. I could walk right down from Barclay Street. Prince Street to Barclay Street.

Q: What were the working conditions like?

Mrs. James: Working with her or for her or what?

Q: Yeah. The physical conditions and the general attitude. How did you get along with her?

Mrs. James: Oh, she was just like a mother or relative. She was just, I got along fine. I didn't have no problems. She treats you just like you was her child. She never had any children, and so the girls that worked for her, you felt like she was a mother.

Q: What kind of money did you earn, Queenie?

Mrs. James: Oh, I made very good. I think when I started working for there, was again, twelve or fifteen dollars a week. You know that was the basic salary. And then you would get twenty-five cents of the dollar. Head then was two dollars and twenty-five cents. And you would get twenty-five cents out of each one of those dollars. Like that. But and yet, would believe it or not, I used to make a hundred, two hundred dollars. Cause you'd be doing some heads then. She had that kind of business.

Q: What were the hours like? How many hours a day or week did you work?

Mrs. James: Well, she liked for you, you start doing your first head at seven in the morning. And I had worked there til two or three in the morning. Yeah. According to how the customers were. And during that time, remember the, the during the war time, the Chicatinney, the ladies used to work there. Well, see they worked on different hours and all. So some of them would come, instead of going home, they would come to the beauty parlor at three, four in the morning. So Mrs. Scott a lot of times would start at three and four in the morning. And she didn't mind getting up working. She'd sit there and do them heads. I'm telling you.

Q: How many days a week did you work at that time?

Mrs. James: Five days. Cause usually they'd be closed Sunday and Monday. We'd work Tuesday through Saturday.

Q: Were there any other people from your home town that worked there at the time?

Mrs. James: No. Not from my home town. But a lot of the girls that did come there, did come from other parts of the south.

Q: How did you get along with the other girls?

Mrs. James: Oh fine. We got along fine, and worked together like family. Theresa, I don't know if you remember, her brother. You know John Amos? He's a star.

Q: Yeah.

Mrs. James: John Amos. Well, Theresa and I were very, that was his sister. And I knew John Amos, you know, when, before he started. You know, when he started. Because her and I were friends. And their mother and all. I used to do his mother's hair and all. John Amos.

Q: So all of these persons, these young ladies who worked there with Mrs. Scott at the time, all of them were of African-American heritage.

Mrs. James: Oh yeah. Yeah. Sure. She, that's all. She was a stick for her people. And with her coming from down south, and she wanted to, her goal was, and she did it, was to help her people.

Q: You've talked about this before, but how were you treated by the supervisor, Mrs. Scott?

Mrs. James: By her?

Q: Yeah.

Mrs. James: Oh fine.

Q: Or was there a supervisor in the shop other than Mrs. Scott who supervised you?

Mrs. James: No, she was the boss and she was the person that told you what to do, or when to do it and what to do. And she'd come and check you, after you washed and shampoo a head, she

would come to the bowls herself and look at that head and see was it rinsed enough, was no soap left in that head, or whatever. She'd come right there with you and pull that hair apart. She had a strong hand. And she just pull your heads apart. I hate for when she would do my hair. Because she would pull it. She had some strength in her hand.

Q: What was your next job after you left Mrs. Scott?

Mrs. James: What did I do. Well, after I left her, I opened my own shop on West Street. After I left her. And I had that for ten or fifteen years. My own on West Street, 55 West Street was my beauty shop. And I had that, and I kept that for maybe fifteen, twenty years or whatever. And then after that, I decided that I loved cooking and fixing, and I started catering and doing little stuff in this house here. In the basement I started cooking and fixing food. And then after that, then I started I did Mayor Gibson's picnics. And I used to control that, you know, seeing that the food was made and all that stuff.

Q: So after your work with Mrs. Scott and learning the beauty trade under her, then you opened your own shop. And then you went into the catering business.

Mrs. James: Catering business after I left beauty culture.

Q: Very interesting.

Mrs. James: Yeah, I went into the catering. And I run the catering business up to a million dollar business. I used to get million dollar contracts.

Q: From the City of Newark?

Mrs. James: Yeah. I used to do those. Remember when they used to feed. I had three trucks to deliver food. Remember when they used to bring the food around to people would say I'll feed the

kids on my block. And like that. I fixed that food.

Q: Oh did you really?

Mrs. James: Yes. And then they would put the order in and they'd come and pick up and then take it back. Or either we would deliver to the different spots.

Q: Well, Queenie, you were close to a millionaire yourself weren't you in your better days?

Mrs. James: In the better days, yes. Well, I used to have the million dollar contracts. It's just the thing about it, you get the contracts, but you don't keep all the money. You know, by the time you. I've held millions of dollars. But, you know, by the time you pay your help and you pay everybody doing this and that, and I had chefs and all. In fact, Joe and Danny was here to my retirement thing, you know, to the party, my anniversary party. And I'm the one that talked them into going in with me to be partners. And that's how we opened up Chef Supreme.

Q: What were the common occupations for black men and women in Newark when you first came?

Mrs. James: Well, mostly for the women I know was, I don't know about men. But when I came, I know my husband was in the foundry. Men were doing a lot of foundry work. And then the women was mostly housework when I came.

Q: What materials, like photographs and pay stubs or uniforms, do you have that pertain to your work experience in Newark?

Mrs. James: Like what?

Q: Any pictures. I know you got lots of pictures from when you worked downtown with Ken



Gibson on your government work.

Mrs. James: But I got other pictures in awards and things like that. I have them. Then my husband took a lot of them down in the basement there. So they're there. But I have a lot of awards of different things that I've done in my lifetime.

Q: If it becomes necessary, as I explained at the beginning, we are trying to establish. This has to do with establishing an oral history of black folk in Newark. But if they, if the Cultural Center were to request copies of some of the documentation that you have, would you be willing to give us copies of some stuff or maybe some pictures. Let's don't bother now, but if it becomes necessary, I'll call you back and I'll come back and.

Mrs. James: And get them. Yeah. Okay. As long as I get them back. I got to bring me back a picture now from.

Q: Well, I wouldn't take anything that you wanted to keep unless it was something that I could make copies of.

Mrs. James: Yeah, well, you make copies.

Q: What church do you belong to?

Mrs. James: You know since I had my stroke and all, my remembrance is not up to par. But I belong up here on Sixteenth Street, Reverend Guise. No, not Reverend Guise. But that's where I go. I'm a member there.

Q: Are you active or were you ever active in the church?

Mrs. James: I was until I got sick like this now. I was over the flower club. Used to see that they

have the flowers every Sunday, you know, on the pulpit and on the railing in the church.

Q: Do you remember any of the ministers who were there? How long have you belonged to that church?

Mrs. James: I guess about ten years or more. Because my first church was Greater Cornerstone of Reverend J. W. Woods. That was the first church I joined because of Mother Woods, was his mother. And she was, I don't know if you remember years ago, had the prayer band. They were called the prayer bands. And she, in fact, she's the one that enticed me to join her church here. Cause I hadn't joined. My church at home was Forty-fifty Street Baptist Church in Birmingham. And then when I came here, she, I used to do her hair, and she would say my son John has a church. You know, and I'd like for you to come. And I went and I joined. And so I was a member of Cornerstone for a long time. And then after that, then I joined the church I'm a member now.

Q: How much have you participated in social and cultural activities in Newark? And what social and cultural clubs, organizations do you belong to now or have you belonged to?

Mrs. James: Well, I belong to Las Amigas, is a national black women's club. In fact, I'm going.

Q: What was that?

Mrs. James: Las Amigas its name.

Q: Las Amigas?

Mrs. James: Las Amigas. L A S A M I G A S. Las Amigas. And it's a national club for black women. And they, their goal is of helping people. That's what you have to do is to we have projects and all. Since I've been a member of this, in fact, I was the president for a long time of

the Newark Chapter. We have chapters all over the country. In fact, they just sent me some flowers or some different things. But and we have regional, you know, members too. We're in the northeast region. And that's a wonderful club for black women all over the country. We've got offices, you know. And I enjoy that because it's a matter of helping people. If we have people have been outdoors, we have put people in places and paid for it to live. We seen that people had food, or whatever the case was. You'd be surprised of the cases that we have helped of people that have come to us. And I love that. I enjoy that.

Q: Did you ever belong to the Eastern Star?

Mrs. James: I think I did long years ago. But I still belong to a women's, in fact, they called me. I'm trying to think of clubs I'm still a member of here in Newark. But I always loved to be in something that's helping somebody.

Q: What about coral ensembles? Did you ever like to sing?

Mrs. James: Here and there, but not really. I just never. I never could sing that much. But I did sing in my choir. In fact, I was the president of my choir for years. Yeah. But I'm no singer.

Q: Okay. You just told me something about the history of the Las Amigas. Were there any other clubs?

Mrs. James: This is our club color here.

Q: For Las Amigas? That's pretty.

Mrs. James: And because they had a meeting, but I didn't go. But they brought me the little souvenirs back.

Q: Who is the president of Las Amigas now? Do you know?

Mrs. James: Yeah, Lorraine Bates.

Q: Does she live in Newark?

Mrs. James: Yes. Las Amigas is one of the very strong black women's.

Q: That's from Chicago for the baby.

Mrs. James: Yeah. Went for my baby, my grandbaby.

Q: Queenie, what was, how much have you participated in political activities?

Mrs. James: Not lately, you know, since I've been sick I haven't participated in anything. But I, you know, I'm always getting calls from some of them would you help me, you know, cause, you know, they always want me to do something. So I'll help them if I can. You know. Who called me just last week or this week. Someone politicking. So I'll, you know, like I said, I'll help them.

Q: But as far as your experience in politics is concerned, precisely what did you do, what kind of connections did you have, what did you politically when you were politically active?

Mrs. James: When I were politically active. Well, what I think, I helped a lot of people to get where they are today. I can say that. A lot of them that are in these different spaces and spots by my going out talking for them. That go for the mayor and all of them. Talking for them, giving parties for them, and having people follow me to listen to them, you know. I thought I helped them a lot.

Q: But now, did you ever hold any elected political office or appointed political office?

Mrs. James: You know, I was the first black chairlady of Essex County.

Q: Of the Democratic.

Mrs. James: Of the Democratic Party.

Q: Party in Essex County.

Mrs. James: I was the first woman of color. And I held that for ten or fifteen years I guess. You know, I was re-elected each year for over ten times or more.

Q: What kind of work did you do in city government?

Mrs. James: Well, I worked at City Hall. And one of my jobs was, trying to think of what's the name. I worked.

Q: In the Office of Consumer Affairs, didn't you?

Mrs. James: Yeah. Consumer Affairs. And that was helping people to find jobs and to do different things, you know, helping people. And I liked that too. I always ask, you know, all the jobs that I had was a part of helping people. I like to work with people. I never did like a job just to be sophisticated or whatever. I wanted to be doing something to help somebody. That has been motto. As my mother always said, if I can just help someone. That's been my motto.

Q: Do you have any mementos pertaining to your work in politics?

Mrs. James: Like what?

Q: Pictures.

Mrs. James: Pictures and stuff.

Q: Certificates, etc.

Mrs. James: Oh I got all that.

Q: And how much have you participated in community activities and what community organizations have you belonged to?

Mrs. James: Oh, that's been my life blood is my community organizations. And to prove that, you know, how I worked in my community. Since I've been sick, my neighbors and people here have been just a gem to me. A gem to me, you know, since I've been sick. And the community people have come here and brought things and just, you know, Mrs. James, we want you to get better. And it just made me feel so good.

Q: What do you consider to be the major accomplishments of the community organizations that you belong to?

Mrs. James: What they have accomplished?

Q: Yes.

Mrs. James: Well, the organizations that I belong to, especially my Las Amigas, we have accomplished a lot of what I would say we own our own home in Frederick in North Carolina. We bought a house there that Las Amigas owns. And I think we're the only club, black club, you know, national that owns their own home. We have our own meeting place. And it's beautiful home we have there. And I think that's one of the highlights of being a part of Las Amigas.

END SIDE ONE, TAPE TWO; BEGIN SIDE ONE, TAPE THREE

Q: Okay, tell me now about what you feel you contributed to the economic life of the city.

Mrs. James: Oh, well when I had my catering business, I was able to hire less fortunate people. I would always look for those people who really a job, and would give them a job. Some of them in there working fixing food or whatever, cleaning up, or whatever they did.

Q: Mr. James, now that you're back with us, what was your participating in Queenie's economic activities? When she owned the beauty shop and when she became a caterer, did you assist her in any way with those things?

Mr. James: I was fortunate enough to be hired. They gave me a job as a janitor, which I was a janitor for Newark Housing Authority. I cleaned up for Newark Housing Authority, I cleaned up for Chef Supreme. So my title never changed That was my contribution to Chef Supreme. They didn't up me a bit. Oh yes, they did make me boss.

Q: They made you boss.

Mr. James: Charge of the janitors.

Mrs. James: In charge of the clean up people.

Q: What was the, you told me that you had, it was a catering business. How large did it eventually become Mrs. James?

Mrs. James: Well, I used to get million dollar contracts. Who was that from?

Mr. James: From the city to feed the children.

Mrs. James: Yeah, feeding the children. Remember when they used to have the summer

programs, and they would take the food.

Q: They'd block off the streets and have playgrounds and feed them lunch. Where was your business located?

Mr. James: 821 Clinton Avenue.

Mrs. James: Clinton Avenue. It's a grocery store there now. I fixed up that building up like it is now with that, the front. Eighteenth and Clinton Avenue, right on the corner. One of them foreign people got it now.

Mr. James: There used to be a place, but it burnt down now.

Mrs. James: Oh yeah. But that building is still there, next to it. 821 Clinton Avenue.

Q: So it's no longer in existence, it's.

Mrs. James: Oh, I don't have any business.

Q: How did you get information on the news and events of the community? This has to do with your life in the Newark community. How were you informed about news events, things that were happening in the City of Newark?

Mr. James: TV.

Mrs. James: Not so that, but I was out involved with the community and the people, and the political people. You know, that's been my life, the political. So I would learn a lot of stuff from them.



Q: Did you read a black newspaper?

Mrs. James: Oh yeah. The Afro-American and all that. Yeah.

Q: Listen to black oriented radio?

Mrs. James: Yeah.

Q: Okay. What radio stations were there for black folk at that time or since your adult life in Newark? What black radio stations?

Mrs. James: Oh, there was WNJR, no that wasn't black owned.

Q: It was not black owned, but it was black oriented.

Mr. James: 3.75.

Q: What was the relationship between black Newark and other black communities in New Jersey?

Mrs. James? Over the differences between?

Q: No. What was the relationship, for instance?

Mrs. James: Oh with other black, Irvington --

Q: Yeah. And East Orange.

Mrs. James: East Orange and like that. Well, I don't know. You know, I think after the riot or something that they started, you know, to figuring that Newark. Before that, Newark was the

place. Cause you would see as many Jews here as you'd see us here. But after the riots, they, you don't see nobody, you know, nothing but us here.

Mr. James: And they still didn't come back.

Mrs. James: And they still didn't come back, yeah.

Q: Did you visit other black communities in the state, in New Jersey?

Mrs. James: Like:

Q: Any of those black communities that we just talked about like Irvington, East Orange.

Mrs. James: Irvington, East Orange. Oh yeah. Yeah. Cause going to meetings and being involved in politics. In fact, I did the whole county of Essex County, you know.

Q: What outstanding black folk did you meet or hear about in Newark?

Mrs. James: Well, you know, outstanding. And Mayor Gibson.

Mr. James: ' Had to say Ken Gibson.

Mrs. James: Yeah. Ken Gibson was my guy, yeah. Yeah, he was. And I liked Ken.

Q: I did too.

Mrs. James: A lot people. I liked him very much. He was calm, didn't get excited, you know.

Q: But when I say black, outstanding blacks, I mean like entertainers or musicians or those kinds

of people. Did you meet any of those kind of people coming to Newark? The Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King came here once I remember.

Mrs. James: Yeah I saw him.

Q: And Jessie Jackson I remember came here.

Mrs. James: Jessie Jackson I like, yeah. And all those.

Q: What do you remember about such public servants as the police, the fire fighters and social workers? What do you remember about those persons? Were there any blacks on the fire department or on the police department when you first came?

Mr. James: The police, what was it Bill Thomas.

Mrs. James: Bill Thomas He was the first black.

Mr. James: Chaplain I think he was in the fire department.

Mrs. James: Bill Thomas. He passed away, yeah.

Mr. James: And policemen, was, who did Sharpe James make, who did Mayor Kenneth Gibson make into chief of police, a black man.

Q: Dudley Kerr.

Mrs. James: Kerr. Mr. Kerr. Yeah, cause Mrs. Kerr and I worked together.

Mr. James: That's police and firemen.

Q: Right. But what about black entertainers, did any black, outstanding black entertainers ever come to Newark?

Mrs. James: Come from here.

Q: Come to Newark that you met that, you know, or knew of coming to Newark?

Mrs. James: Cause I used to keep up with all that stuff when I was young. But they used to have all them come down to the Symphony Hall and I used to go see them.

Mr. James: We went to see B.B. King at Symphony Hall. Bobbie Bluebland.

Mrs. James: Bobbie Bluebland. Them my favorite ones.

Q: Entertainers, yeah.

Mrs. James: Yeah. Yeah. Tell me where they is, I'll walk a mile.

Mr. James: And she'd still go. Bobbie Bluebland, B.B. King. Oh, and don't leave out Ray Charles at --

Mrs. James: Ray Charles.

Mr. James: What was it at City College when Ray Charles gave a.

Mrs. James: Essex County College.

Mr. James: Essex County College. Ray Charles gave a program. We went over there. God bless him, David Barker was there. We saw David Barker with Ray Charles perform at the City

College. We saw Ray Charles.

Q: When you or others in your neighborhood got in trouble or needed help to solve a problem, to whom in Newark did you turn? Why and how effective were they in helping you or others?

Mrs. James: Well, I had a good relationship with both of the mayors that have been there. Of our mayors, of Gibson and Sharpe.

Mr. James: As Bernice say, Kenneth Allen Gibson.

Mrs. James: Yeah. I had the good relationship with him. And even today, I can call them and they will come if I call them.

Q: What was the difference or did you see any difference in the relationship between Hugh Adenizio as mayor and Kenneth Gibson and Sharpe James?

Mrs. James: Well, believe it or not, I was a good friend of Hugh Adenizio. I could talk to him. And we had a pretty nice relationship. But, you know, being of my nationality, and Sharpe and them were my nationality, quite naturally I could talk better and more openly to them than I would to Adenizio.

Q: Did you find Mr Adenizio in general helpful and responsive to black folk?

Mrs. James: Yeah. He. Yeah he would do with Larry. Yeah, he did some good things and then, he for a few. And Larry, well, Larry come out the best of it I guess or whatever.

Mr. James: I don't want to put Irving I. Turner before he passed. I don't know if Irving I. Turner was. It was a shame what they did to Irving Turner.

Mrs. James: Yeah.

Mr. James: Do you know anything about Irving Turner?

Q: I just remember he was the first black councilman in the City of Newark.

Mr. James: And they gave him a job as a damn custodian and everybody they's checking. You know. These politicians that they lose like Earl Harris, they're supposed to look out for them. They didn't look out for Irving I. Turner.

Q: What about the conflict between Wilbur Park and Mr. Cavanaugh for the job at the Board of Education? You remember that?

Mrs. James: I know about it, but I. Cavanaugh and

Q: Wilbur Parker.

Mrs. James: Parker. Yeah, but I don't remember.

Q: Some people say that the conflict between Parker and Cavanaugh was the reason for the riots. And then I heard others say that it was because of some conflict with the policemen and a black taxi driver.

Mrs. James: Yeah, taxi driver. I don't even.

Mr. James: Leave that alone.

Mrs. James: Right.

Q: Okay, where do you remember black people living in Newark and how was black Newark perceived? Was the community seen as a slum?

Mrs. James: When I came to Newark, what years back?

Q: When you came to Newark and the years have progressed. Do you see a difference in the way black people live now in Newark, and the way black people lived in Newark when you first came?

Mrs. James: Yeah, because most black people living in the Central Ward. And now they have been able to move up now, close to Hillside and all that to the South Ward. And a lot of black people moved into the North Ward.

Mr. James: When John Payne was campaigning the South Ward came up a little bit higher than the Central Ward because you always counted on the Central Ward. If anybody coming anywhere to be anything, they come to the South Ward. First black Congressman.

Mrs. James: That's my guy. I worked with him hand and foot.

Q: Did all classes of African-Americans live close to you? All kind, you know, like people who were the lower echelon or lower rung of the economic ladder and those in the middle and those at the top as far as black people were concerned. Did all of these people live in the same neighborhood at the same time?

Mrs. James: Where are you talking about?

Q: Here in Newark.

Mrs. James: Pretty close, yeah.

Mr. James: Central Ward, South Ward, not too many in the North Ward. With Imperiali [Mr. James fades out quite often as he must be far from the microphone], breaking into the office, and having that problem with Kenneth Gibson.

Q: Now this is a very interesting question. I want both of you guys to think about this. Other than white store owners and other whites with a vested economic interest, do you recall any other whites having an interest in the black community?

Mr. James: I worked for Mavy Lipschitz, 497 Clinton Avenue, who owned a delicatessen, who was very active in the welfare of the black people in the community. He was one of the Jews that, in the Jewish area that served corned beef sandwich, where you could come on Clinton Avenue with.

Mrs. James: Chicken sandwich.

Mr. James: Chicken sandwich at 497 Clinton Avenue. And that would be the time when Captain Fisher was also the captain on the Fifteenth. Many Lipschitz was one of the outstanding --

Mrs. James: Jewish.

Mr. James: Jewish individuals who contributed. Because he gave me a J O B. And that stands out.

Q: Queenie, what other experiences can you recall where white folk were particularly helpful or showed interest in the black community?

Mrs. James: In my politicking I met some of the, you know, white people that have, you know, have a lot of interest. Like I tell you who, Tommy Giblin, who is a freeholder now. He had been very outspoken and whatever. I remember occasions when --



Mr. James: And his father.

Mrs. James: Yeah, and his father. Yeah. And what was that time when they didn't want to say something and Tommy came by and said, why don't you just say. You didn't want to do it because it was black. Something, some kind of meeting, political meeting. And I never will forget, and I respect him for that. Because they were beating around the bush in the meeting, and all, and he came out and said, well, why don't you just say it like it is or tell it what you're trying to say.

Mr. James: A good old Irishman. He says, just tell it like it is.

Mrs. James: And I never will forget that.

Mr. James: Tommy Giblin.

Mrs. James: Tommy Giblin. He's one Irishman that I know that cares, you know.

Q: Did you shop in downtown Newark? If so, at which stores and why? And what do you consider to have been Newark's best stores?

Mr. James: Bamberger's. Bamberger's. Ohrbach's.

Mrs. James: Yeah. Bamberger's and Ohrbach's was my favorite.

Mr. James: And Hanes.

Mrs. James: And they're all gone now. Yeah. Those were my stores, yeah.

Q: What incidents involving racial discrimination in Newark have you experienced? Give details.

Was there ever any time when you went to a store, to a restaurant, or anywhere in Newark that you were discriminated against because you were who you were?

Mrs. James: Years back, when I was young. I would say forty years back or more. You would go in a store, and they didn't want us as black people to try, right here in Newark, to try on the dress. But I was the kind that if I couldn't try it on, I didn't buy it. But it was some occasions that I walked out of stores that they say you can't try it on here and buy it. At that time yeah.

Q: What about you? Did you run into any discrimination in any of your experiences in Newark?

Mr. James: Quite a few. A lot of people forget about the Novelty Bar that was on Market Street. You know what I'm talking about when I say the Novelty Bar. Novelty Bar had a time when colored had to have a card to come in and be served. If you didn't have a card to be served, you couldn't come in with a guest to be served. That was one of the particular things that I always remember about the Novelty Bar. Which is gone and out of business already.

Q: Was that? Those were the only?

Mr. James: Oh I can. Oh I can go back to the Grill Bar. The Grill Bar back in the 40s when if you were colored and they served you, they'd break the glass. They'd serve you, but they'd break the glass. Clinton Avenue and Bergen Street, them two brothers owned the bar.

Q: Now, here's a question I know exactly nothing about. What do you remember about the Mayor of Springfield Avenue?

Mrs. James: Mayor of Springfield Avenue. That do. Who they call the Mayor of Springfield Avenue?

Mr. James: I don't know if it was Earl Harris. No, Earl Harris never was the mayor. I don't know

if it was Kenneth Allen Gibson. I guess in your time you could say Kenneth Allen Gibson.

Q: No this had to be a black, a permanent person who was, had a lot to do with perhaps.

Mrs. James: Politics or some.

Q: Politics and the commerce on Springfield Avenue.

Mrs. James: Yeah, it would have to be like a councilman living in that area. That do sound familiar, but I just can't think.

Q: What do you remember regarding such local personalities as William Ashby, who was an early black social worker; Meyer Ellingstein, Newark's first Jewish mayor; and Prosper Brewer, and Irving Turner.

Mrs. James: Irving Turner, yeah.

Q: You remember. What do you remember about, anything particular you remember about any of those people?

Mrs. James: Well, Irving, I'm trying to think of something. Yes. Was it before we got to.

Mr. James: Meyer Ellingstein called Charlie Matthews his man Friday, back in those days.

Q: That was a flunkie. A sophisticated name for a flunkie. They changed, they named a street for Irving Turner.

Mrs. James: Yeah, on Belmont Avenue.

Q: Was Belmont Avenue. Now it's Irving Turner Blvd. To Jones Street.

Mr. James: Then Clinton Avenue and Belmont Avenue it keeps on going on and on.

Q: But from Springfield Avenue to the end going.

Mr. James: To Avon Avenue is Irving I. Turner Blvd. Irving I. Turner Avenue.

Q: It starts at Springfield Avenue, at the intersection of Springfield Avenue and Court Street there.

Mr. James: Does it go back to Avon Avenue?

Q: It goes in that direction. But I don't know how far over. I thought it was Irving Turner Blvd. from that junction all the way out.

Mr. James: Eight of ten blocks, but not too long.

Q: Okay, we're getting close to the end guys. What do you remember regarding black institutions, like hospitals, hotels and banks? Where were they located and how important were they to the black community? Were you served by such institutions, and what individuals do you remember being associated with such institutions?

Mr. James: Charlie A. Williams, on Broad Street, black bank. Only one I know.

Q: City National Bank.

Mr. James: City National Bank was the only black owned bank that I know of.

Q: And there used to be a Coleman Hotel. Do you remember?

Mrs. James: Coleman Hotel. Yeah. I remember Coleman on Court Street.

Mr. James: Court Street near Washington Street.

Mrs. James: But there was the Coleman brothers, they used to sing. They had a gleeclub group.

Q: And now they own a couple of barbecue stores in the City of Newark. The one up on South Orange Avenue.

Mrs. James: Oh they still got one?

Q: They're still up there.

Mrs. James: No kidding. I didn't know that.

Q: They call it Brothers Barbecue, but it's the Coleman Brothers.

Mr. James: It's still affiliated with the Coleman Brothers.

Mrs. James: Oh. I didn't know that.

Mr. James: You enlightened me to something. I didn't know that.

Q: In what leisure time activities like singing or story telling or quilting, basket weaving, gardening, movies, playing sports did you engage? Did you do any of these things? Or do you still do any of them?

Mrs. James: Played sports.

Q: He played sports.

Mrs. James: If he'd of, if they'd have taken blacks at that time. Was that Tommy?

Mr. James: I used to play for the Newark Eagles.

Mrs. James: He used to play for the Newark Eagles. So he went to service and. Who is it?

[Interruption for someone coming in]

Q: Okay, so he played sports.

Mrs. James: Baseball. He was good. They say from a little kid. I'd hear some old, older than us, used to say that boy, cause, old men now I meet then, that boy if they would have been taking blacks during his time, you know, he would have been one of the stars. They say he was really good.

Q: What do you know about the Newark Eagles? Remember the Newark Eagles baseball team?

Mrs. James: Yeah.

Q: Did you attend any of their games?

Mrs. James: Yeah. Yeah. We did.

Q: Were there any other black athletes or athletics or sports events that you attended, aside from the Eagles games?

Mrs. James: No.

Q: Okay, what do you recall regarding the seamy side of black Newark life? Like we talked about the girls of the night, etc., and night life as far as bars and saloons, etc., were concerned? Do you recall any of that stuff Queenie?

Mrs. James: The night life in Newark then?

Q: Yes.

Mrs. James: Yeah. I recall when the girls was really flirting out on the block, they used to call it in my time. The girls that work out on the block. They'd be standing in front of the different clubs, and getting the white men come in, you know, coming across. And I've seen it, you know, many times. And they'd pick them up in the cars and keep on going or whatever. That was really when Newark was wide open. You know. They did it and wasn't trying to hide. To me. I don't know. And you see so many young, pretty girls that used to do all that. We had a girl we met, do you hear when Tommy come, think of her name, that the guy put on the block. Tommy.

Mr. James: What?

Mrs. James: Who was that girl we, used to be a friend of ours of whatever, the man put on the block.

Mr. James: Stub Jackson.

Mrs. James: Stub Jackson used to be the main man here in Newark. He's dead now, ain't he?

Mr. James: Yeah.

Mrs. James: Stub Jackson. He used to have all the prostitutes. And, oh Lord, he'd have some pretty girls. Pretty girls, I mean, they just. He'd catch them when they just come here from down south. And end up being up on the block.

Mr. James: Don't leave out. What was the one that got busted Roosevelt. Joe. What was Joe's name that had that white girl caught up in that.

Mrs. James: Joe Magett.

Mr. James: Oh Joe Magett was one. Danny Coleman was another. Richard, Charlie.

Mrs. James: Richard, Charlie.

Mr. James: Duke.

Mrs. James: Boy when I used to see and meet them girls and things. And they'd say, oh I can't do this. I can't do that. Cause I got to be out there on the block. They got to be out there to make that money. They got to take them so much money back. And I could never understand. I was young myself then, you know. And I could never understand. I never could see where I got to be doing this. If I did it, it would be for me. You know, I just could never understand that life that I got to give my money. My husband will tell you that today. And we've been married fifty years. And I ain't giving nobody my money. Right now, we both getting checks, Social Security checks and pensions. He got his and I got mine. I'm telling you.

Q: Do you remember any black gangsters in Newark?

Mrs. James: Tommy! Do you remember any black gangsters in Newark? Not gangsters but like Johnny Sharp and all them. They were number writers. Johnny Sharp was the biggest.



Mr. James: Emory Hall.

Mrs. James: Emory Hall.

Mr. James: Worked for Venussi. Two Day Wooley. But these were participants, but they weren't black gangsters.

Mrs. James: But they big time gamblers.

Q: Can you think of any positive contribution that they made in Newark? Or did they just earn money and take it out of Newark?

Mr. James: Oh pimps and hustlers, they made the money in Newark, but they ain't spent the money in Newark. But they didn't. Because that's where they partied at and the gamblers spent their money in Newark.

Q: What do you recall regarding public education in Newark? How well did black students seem to perform and how were they treated by white teachers or white students? Were black students involved in?

Mrs. James: I didn't go to school here so. Went to all black schools.

Q: You went to all black schools.

Mrs. James: In Alabama, yeah. You know, they had the black and the white school.

Q: But you did you notice living in Newark?

Mrs. James: Oh you mean with my children and all that?

Q: With your children or your experiences with education in the City of Newark.

Mrs James: Yeah, well when Deborah and Sam and then started to school, I don't know the little white girls, they used to come here though and have lunch with my daughter when they were in school. I never had a real problem.

Q: What was the quality of education like in the City of Newark then?

Mrs. James: Oh it was good. It was good. Yes. Newark was really good with education, and they looked the teachers took up time with them and like that Cause I was the kind of mother that if they didn't do it, I had no problem with the teacher coming here or calling me up. And I let my teachers know call me if they ain't doing the right thing, call me up and let me know. And I went right to school and who that I tore up in school? Deborah or one of them. And whip them right there in the school.

Q: Do you recall any particular black teachers who were in the system when your children were in school?

Mr James: I go back so far I can't recall now.

Mrs. James: Well, you went to school here. See, I didn't go to school.

Mr. James: Were there black teachers? Not back in those days in the time I was going to school back in the 30s.

Mrs James: What you have white teachers?

Mr. James: The majority were white. Was a few, a few black teachers. Not an awful lot to remember because I went to Montgomery Street School way back, when I was going to

Montgomery Street and Atlanta School, there was a teacher I can't recall her name that, I'm going back maybe sixty years ago.

Q: What would you consider to be the five most important events or developments that have occurred in Newark during your residence here? For example, like strikes or elections, riots, fires, natural disasters, black immigration, like people coming from --

Mrs. James: Other countries.

Q: Other countries coming in to Newark.

Mrs. James: Well, I see that's happening now with all these people, all these different nationalities coming here and they get treated better than we do and been here all our lives. And they get that kind of respect. They can go into business. Somehow they help them to open up their own businesses and all that.

Q: Do you remember any particular strikes of any significance like teachers strikes or labor strikes or whatever?

Mr. James: What was the name of?

Mrs. James: Cal Graves.

Mr. James: Cal Graves for a teachers strike. And the riot, the riot changed Newark around completely. Newark took a complete. The riot analysis, Newark changed completely after Riot Number 2.

Q: When was riot number one?

Mr. James: They had two riots in Newark. You don't recall.

Q: No I remember the one in 67.

END SIDE ONE, TAPE THREE; BEGIN SIDE TWO, TAPE THREE

Q: Okay, we talked about the teachers strike in Newark and we talked briefly about the riots. What do you recall about the riot in Newark in 67 I believe it was or 68?

Mrs. James: What do you recall about the riot in 67 Tommy?

Mr. James: Terrible. Terrible. Terrible.

Q: Where were you Queenie when the riot happened? Do you remember?

Mrs. James: Was I here in this house? Yeah, in the riot I was here. And what I did, just stayed closed in, locked in.

Mr. James: That boy come from Montclair for a six pack beer on, there was a package goods store on Avon and Belmont Avenue and they killed him. He got killed. Come all the way from Montclair for a six pack of beer and lost his life.

Q: Stole a six pack.

Mr. James: Got killed. All he had was a six pack of beer. Teenager that lived in Montclair.

Q: What about political elections in the City of Newark? How have you seen them take place and what has been the result, and particularly, were they beneficial to the blacks who lived in Newark?

Mrs .James: The elections.

Q: Yes.

Mrs. James: Well, some have. I think that the ones that we have elected, they have tried to do pretty fair. They could do better. And their concerns should be more of advancing us, where, and I guess they can't be partial or whatever. But I have seen some things that they've done that have benefitted us. And hope that they will continue or try to do better whatever.

Q: Do you remember how many black elected officials were in Newark when you first became involved in politics?

Mr. James: Matthews, Irving I. Turner. Two outstanding individuals in their particular time. Then after that then comes Ken Gibson and Larry Stark and then the rest of them come on. Earl Harris.

Q: Sharpe James, John Tucker.

Mr. James: Sharpe James, John Tucker. Willie Brown. All those individuals. George Branch.

Mrs. James: Donald Payne. Donald Payne now became our congressman of which I'm very proud. I worked very closely with him. Don and I started out as chairs.

Q: So there has been quite a few black folk elected to political office. And let me just ask me this, and I want you to think carefully about it. Can you see any difference in the way that blacks have treated each other in the way we have progressed or not progressed because of black people having been elected to political office?

Mrs .James: How they have treated each other The blacks have treated each other.

Q: Each other, and has it made any difference for black people who live in Newark?

Mrs. James: Well, to a certain extent it has because black people have more jobs down in City Hall and all that than they probably would have with the other mayors. I remember Adenizio and all of that stuff. And I think there's more black people working for the city than it was during that time. They had a few, you know, but tokens. But now it's completely practically black. So I think it has been.

Mr. James: Who is the one from Newark Housing Authority that Gibson gave a good to. His wife's named Mary.

Mrs. James: His wife named Mary.

Mr. James: Worked for Newark Housing Authority.

Q: Elton Hughes.

Mr. James: Elton.

Mrs. James: Elton, yeah.

Mr. James: Elton was a member of the. Because he used to be a carpenter in Newark Housing Authority.

Mrs. James: In Newark Housing Authority. Came right on up the ladder.

Q: To become business administrator in the City of Newark. And also Daniel Blue.

Mrs. James: And Dan Blue, yeah. Dannie Blue, I remember good.

Mr. James: Earl Phillips, Newark Housing Authority.

Q: In what major ways has Newark changed since you first came here and how do you view the changes that have occurred?

Mrs. James: Well, there's been a lot of changes because there was changes when we elected more black people. When I came to Newark, it was the other people running it. You know, running the city. They were the mayors and they were the councilman and whatever. And now we have a change, you know, of elected some of our people which I think is good, you know, They might not have done everything that we think they could have done. That's my personal feelings.

Mr. James: Or what they should have done.

Mrs. James: Or what they should have done. But still I'm glad to see them there.

Mr. James: And hope that they do better.

Q: What traditions or celebrations or events in Newark that you witnessed or that you have seen or known to take place in the past and they no longer exist in Newark? And what happened to them? And how do you feel about their disappearance.

Mr. James: Christmas Attic.

Mrs. James: Christmas Attic. I was a part of that and helped started that. Christmas Attic.

Q: The Christmas Attics Parade.

Mrs. James: I was a part of that. And I was a charter member of Christmas Attics. And I thought that was a beautiful thing. We had that going.

Mr. James: And it faded into the sunset.

Mrs. James: And faded into the sunset, and they just let it go.

Q: Were there any others, celebrations? Not necessarily of black folk. I can remember when they used to have the St. Patrick's Parade down Broad Street in Newark. And then they moved it up to Vailsburg.

Mrs. James: Vailsburg. That's right. Sure did. And that was beautiful.

Q: Okay. When do you feel black life in Newark reached its highest peak and what was so great about this particular time? When you do feel black life in Newark reached its lowest point. Or when do you feel that black life in Newark reached its lowest point and what was so bad about this particular time? In other words, I'm asking you what was the high point as far as you were concerned, what happened there and who was involved if you can remember. And what do you think was the very lowest point?

Mrs. James: Well, the highest point when we elected Kenneth Allen Gibson as the first black mayor of the City of Newark.

Mr. James: And the lowest point has been Grant and Harris got involved in this ridiculous, whatever they was doing. And whatever it was. And they got in trouble and convicted. I don't know if they went to jail or not. But the high point was Kenneth Allen Gibson becoming the first black man to become a Mayor of Newark in umpteen years.

Q: What changed when Ken became mayor in Newark? What changed for us?

Mr. James: J O B. Black people got more jobs than ever had before.



Mrs. James: Got more jobs. Sure did. In their life.

Mr. James: Because I saw more black people working in City Hall than I ever saw before in my life irregardless of how many people Hugh Adenizio had. But it was predominantly blacks down there. From the police chief and all the way down, quite a few. Including my wife had a job which she didn't have under Hugh Adenizio. It was only Larry Starks. Who else had a big job down there then? Not too many. That was the high point of Kenneth Allen Gibson becoming the mayor. And also Sharpe James.

Mrs. James: And high, and Ken, you know, just really hired his people. I tell you. You really have to give him credit. He looked after his people. And he would say, I would be in his personal meetings, and he would tell us that, you know, he would do all he could for us as long as you kept your nose clean and like that. So now the ones that went in there and didn't do that, that's it. But he used to tell them to keep their nose clean and he would take care of them.

Q: Well, I see I know those names but these people who will be listening to this. See this is going to be a part of the oral history of blacks in Newark. So those, such things as you can remember.

Mr. James: Which was a disappointment. Earl Harris and Ron T. Grant being convicted of whatever. Whatever they done was wrong. And eventually I imagine they going to jail. I don't know what the outcome might be. But that was the low point what they done to the City of Newark.

Q: What about the economic status of black people in Newark when you came as opposed to what it eventually became, or how did it progress downward from the point where it was when you came? You talk about black people having been able to get jobs, or you worked when you came, you worked when you came, and you continued to be employed until you retired. But there were so many black people in Newark who had no jobs, couldn't find jobs, and did you see, do you see that creating social changes in Newark as well as economic changes? We've talked

about and we have noticed how black youth and black adults became involved in the drug culture. Black adults selling it through young adults, etc. So how do you think that impacted on Newark? Could we have done things differently or should we have been more aware of what was happening to our people?

Mrs. James: Well, I feel we should have been more aware. And the things about it, I think, like he said, the welfare has had a lot to do with it too. If we would give those people jobs instead of welfare. I think they should work. I don't care what. If it ain't nothing but sweeping the streets or whatever. I think they should still do it now, you know. Give people jobs. And get them off of welfare. Because they make it a life, you know. Some people have been there ten, fifteen, twenty years. They stay on there until the kids get twenty years old or whatever, nineteen.

Q: This is the last category Mrs. James. And this will particularly pertain to you. But then there are two brief questions after that. But I want you to do is to tell me about your experience with Louise Scott from the time that you first knew her and what your experience was like, you know, with her, how long you were with her, and generally what you thought of her as a person. So I will keep quiet and I will just listen to you.

Mrs. James: Okay. Well, Mrs. Scott was a gem. She was for her people and whatever she did, she tried to enlighten and make life better for her people. And I'm a living witness of it. I've seen her take in people, train them and give them a job. And that was what she was all about. She knew if her people had a job they could make it. And, that, oh yeah, she gave me a job. I worked for her and she was like a godmother to me. My aunt and her were friends. She gave me my first vacation to Chicago. And paid a month. I went for a month vacation. And she paid for it. Me and two other girls to be. Her brother is, works in, yeah, what's Theresa's brother. He's you know he's a star. Theresa's brother. Yeah, but he's in the.

Q: John Amos.

Mrs. James: John Amos. I knew him. I used to babysit John Amos. Cause see me and her were friends, his sister. And she would bring him. Yeah. Yeah. When he was little. And I would help her babysit because her mother said we couldn't go out. We want to hang out. Couldn't go out unless you take him. So we had to take John Amos around with us. He called me sister. Now today we never see him. But she was one for her people. She wanted to see her people, you know, get better, have a better life and everything Older building.

Mr. James: Scott's Building by Lincoln Park. That Scott's building and the hotel on.

Mrs. James: Well, she bought on Barclay Street she owned that whole block. Yeah. On Barclay Street from, where, Spruce Street on down or somewhere. Yeah. Well, most of that block she owned. And one thing I liked about her. She would teach her girls. And she wouldn't all just be looking for herself. She taught us how to make it in life. And I give her the credit for whatever I have accomplished, I give her the credit from the knowledge that she gave me.

Q: We talked about the fact that Mrs Scott was the first black female millionaire in the City of Newark.

Mr. James: Like Mrs Walker.

Mrs. James: The hairdresser Madam Walker.

Q: Madam C. J. Walker. Was she in Newark too?

Mr. James: No.

Q: I didn't think. She was in Chicago wasn't she?

Mr. James: Chicago, yeah. Louise Scott was Newark.

Mrs. James: So go ahead. What were you saying?

Q: You were talking a little while ago about how much it cost to do hair at the time Mrs. Scott first started in business and what she paid her girls. And you talked about how she collected the money and put it in stockings. Tell me about that Queenie.

Mrs. James: We didn't wear pantyhose. They wasn't out then. So you know it was the stockings. And she would have those stockings loaded up with money. Two dollars, you know, Tied up after she'd get it full with the two dollars. And she'd line them up in a safe deposit box.

Q: When you say two dollars, two dollar bills are you talking about?

Mrs. James: No. Just two dollars. One dollar, you had was two dollars. And so the people give you two one dollars. And she would have it all lined up in those stockings. And then she would just fold it up after you get it to the top, she'd tie it up and she'd put it in her safe deposit box.

Mr. James: And when you went in business, you used to get three dollars for a head.

Mrs. James: Yeah.

Mr. James: Used to have on 55 West Street.

Mrs. James: Then we went to two fifty, and then three dollars.

Mr. James: Lord have mercy. Go to a beauty parlor now.

Q: Now what years was that, Queenie, you remember?

Mrs. James: Well, I came in Newark in '41, and I went to school. I didn't get my license til like

42 cause I went to school for the whole year just about. So I was licensed in 42. In the 40s.

Mr. James: Late 40s.

Mrs. James: That I worked for Mrs. Scott. No way. Early 40s.

Mr. James: Early 40s. But I'm talking about when you went in business.

Mrs. James: Oh for myself. I went in there about. Oh yeah, I married in 46 and I was in the business when I married you. Okay. So I went in business about 1944, 43, 44, something like that.

Q: So that was in the, say late 30s, when Mrs. Scott was in her heyday.

Mrs. Scott: When she was in her prime.

Q: When she was putting all these two dollars in these stockings that was like.

Mrs. James: Well, I started, I didn't come to Newark until 1941 or something. So I started was I came in 1941. So I saw her say in 42, 43, like that. And she would put all this money in these stockings and then tie it up. And she'd have them lined up nice neatly in this vault. Just like that, line by line with them two dollars was in them. And she made some money. I tell you. But the thing about it, she wanted her people. She was a lover, you can put that in there, she was a lover of her people. You know. She realized from her comes I think from South Carolina, where she's born.

Mr. James: In my father's home town in South Carolina.

Q: What town was that?

Mr. James: I don't know what town in South Carolina. My father knew Mrs. Scott and say came from South Carolina. What part of South Carolina I don't know.

Mrs. James: But she had a knack for her people, helping her people. And she would take people out and try to learn them, teach them, whatever. That was her goal. And she made it. And I thought that was, made her a beautiful person as far as I'm concerned.

Q: Okay, the final two questions on our interview is how would you sum up your experience in living in Newark? And if you had your life to live over, would you live it in Newark and give reasons for your answers?

Mrs. James: Well, I found my life in Newark to be very well. I'm very happy. I don't have any, no intentions of leaving Newark. I've been here all these years and I'm very happy in Newark. Newark has been good to me, and I don't see any need of me to go somewhere else where I'm not known. Here I'm known. And it has been a good life for me. So I don't, you know, I don't like a lot of my friends I've known over the years, oh, I'm going to move to South Orange, I'm going here. Well, I've never been a person for moving a lot anyway. All the years that I've been here, I ain't lived but in three places in Newark. I came to Newark on Prince Street with my uncle. And then when I get married we went to West Street where I had my beauty shop. And then we went across the street, and then here. So Newark, you know, and I've had the opportunity to buy anywhere I want to buy. You know, I made that kind of money. But I like Newark. And Newark's been good to me.

Mr. James: You want my comment.

Q: Yeah. Just let Queenie answer this. If you had your life to live over, would you live in Newark?

Mrs. James: Yeah. I really don't see that much difference from Orange or East Orange that then

Newark. You know, I've lived here near fifty years and I got beautiful neighbors. Everybody try to keep their home up. If you go somewhere else, they'd only try to do the same thing. Keep their homes up, their yards up and things. So I'm happy here. I'll die here. I'll just be here.

Q: Okay, Mr. James. How would you sum up your experience of living in Newark?

Mr. James: From the childhood of five and work here all my life til I retired at 65 from various fields in the job from construction work, bartending work, Newark Housing Authority and all of it, I wouldn't change it for a bag of beans. Because all my life has been Newark. Newark. Newark. Newark. And I wouldn't change it for nothing. Because I saw the ups, I saw the downs. And I worked and I retired. Now why should I change my lifestyle now? Thank you.

Q: Okay, now you answered my question anyway. If you had to live your life over, would you live it in Newark?

Mr. James: Hell yes. Yes. Hell yes. I saw the ups and downs and the high spots and low spots of my life. Yes. I'd live in Newark. And might be better. In fact, at my age I guess I'll be better than Newark. N E W A R K, Newark, New Jersey.

Q: Well, I want to thank you both for giving me this opportunity to come and to talk to you both. I had known Queenie for those years that we worked together down Newark. But I didn't know very much about you. You're a gem. You are a real gem.

Mrs. James: Fifty years, I tell you, of marriage. He's been a good husband.

Q: Well, I am eternally grateful to both of you. And again I thank you.

END OF INTERVIEW